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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations by G. H. Thomas

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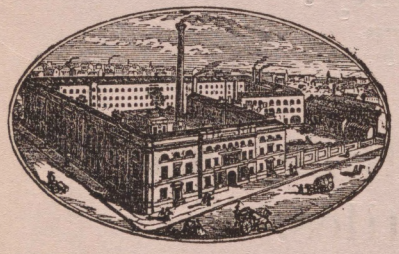

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CHAPTER LXVII.

IN MEMORIAM.

THE bishop when he had heard the tidings of his wife's death walked back to his seat over the fire, and Mrs. Draper, the housekeeper, came and stood over him without speaking. Thus she stood for ten minutes looking down at him and listening. But there was no sound; not a word, nor a moan, nor a sob. It was as though he also were dead, but that a slight irregular movement of his fingers on the top of his bald head, told her that his mind and body were still active. "My lord," she said at last, "would you wish to see the doctor when he comes?" She spoke very low and he did not answer her. Then, after another minute of silence, she asked the same question again.

"What doctor?" he said.

"Dr. Filgrave. We sent for him. Perhaps he is here now. Shall I go and see, my lord?" Mrs. Draper found that her position there was weary and she wished to escape. Anything on his behalf requiring trouble or work she would have done willingly; but she could not stand there for ever watching the motion of his fingers.

"I suppose I must see him," said the bishop. Mrs. Draper took this as an order for her departure and crept silently out of the room, closing the door behind her with the long protracted elaborate click which is always produced by an attempt at silence on such occasions. He did not care for noise or for silence. Had she slammed the door he would not have regarded it. A wonderful silence had come upon him

which for the time almost crushed him. He would never hear that well-known voice again!

He was free now. Even in his misery,—for he was very miserable,—he could not refrain from telling himself that. No one could now press uncalled-for into his study, contradict him in the presence of those before whom he was bound to be authoritative, and rob him of all his dignity. There was no one else of whom he was afraid. She had at least kept him out of the hands of other tyrants. He was now his own master, and there was a feeling,—I may not call it of relief, for as yet there was more of pain in it than of satisfaction,—a feeling as though he had escaped from an old trouble at a terrible cost of which he could not as yet calculate the amount. He knew that he might now give up all idea of writing to the archbishop.

She had in some ways, and at certain periods of his life, been very good to him. She had kept his money for him and made things go straight, when they had been poor. His interests had always been her interests. Without her he would never have been a bishop. So, at least, he told himself now, and so told himself probably with truth. She had been very careful of his children. She had never been idle. She had never been fond of pleasure. She had neglected no acknowledged duty. He did not doubt that she was now on her way to heaven. He took his hands down from his head, and clasping them together, said a little prayer. It may be doubted whether he quite knew for what he was praying. The idea of praying for her soul, now that she was dead, would have scandalized him. He certainly was not praying for his own soul. I think he was praying that God might save him from being glad that his wife was dead.

But she was dead;—and, as it were, in a moment! He had not stirred out of that room since she had been there with him. Then there had been angry words between them,—perhaps more determined enmity on his part than ever had before existed; and they had parted for the last time with bitter animosity. But he told himself that he had certainly been right in what he had done then. He thought he had been right then. And so his mind went back to the Crawley and Thumble question, and he tried to alleviate the misery which that last interview with his wife now created by assuring himself that he at least had been justified in what he had done.

But yet his thoughts were very tender to her. Nothing reopens the springs of love so fully as absence, and no absence so thoroughly as that which must needs be endless. We want that which we have not; and especially that which we can never have. She had told him in the

very last moments of her presence with him that he was wishing that she were dead, and he had made her no reply. At the moment he had felt, with savage anger, that such was his wish. Her words had now come to pass, and he was a widower,—and he assured himself that he would give all that he possessed in the world to bring her back again.

Yes, he was a widower, and he might do as he pleased. The tyrant was gone, and he was free. The tyrant was gone, and the tyranny had doubtless been very oppressive. Who had suffered as he had done? But in thus being left without his tyrant he was wretchedly desolate. Might it not be that the tyranny had been good for him?—that the Lord had known best what wife was fit for him? Then he thought of a story which he had read,—and had well marked as he was reading,—of some man who had been terribly afflicted by his wife, whose wife had starved him and beaten him and reviled him; and yet this man had been able to thank his God for having thus mortified him in the flesh. Might it not be that the mortification which he himself had doubtless suffered in his flesh had been intended for his welfare, and had been very good for him? But if this were so, it might be that the mortification was now removed because the Lord knew that his servant had been sufficiently mortified. He had not been starved or beaten, but the mortification had been certainly severe. Then there came words—into his mind, not into his mouth—"The Lord sent the thorn, and the Lord has taken it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." After that he was very angry with himself, and tried to pray that he might be forgiven. While he was so striving there came a low knock at the door, and Mrs. Draper again entered the room.

"Dr. Filgrave, my lord, was not at home," said Mrs. Draper; "but he will be sent the very moment he arrives."

"Very well, Mrs. Draper."

"But, my lord, will you not come to your dinner? A little soup, or a morsel of something to eat, and a glass of wine, will enable your lordship to bear it better." He allowed Mrs. Draper to persuade him, and followed her into the dining-room. "Do not go, Mrs. Draper," he said; "I would rather that you should stay with me." So Mrs. Draper stayed with him, and administered to his wants. He was desirous of being seen by as few eyes as possible in these the first moments of his freedom.

He saw Dr. Filgrave twice, both before and after the doctor had been upstairs. There was no doubt, Dr. Filgrave said, that it was as Mrs. Draper had surmised. The poor lady was suffering, and

had for years been suffering, from heart-complaint. To her husband she had never said a word on the subject. To Mrs. Draper a word had been said now and again,—a word when some moment of fear would come, when some sharp stroke of agony would tell of danger. But Mrs. Draper had kept the secret of her mistress, and none of the family had known that there was aught to be feared. Dr. Filgrave, indeed, did tell the bishop that he had dreaded all along exactly that which had happened. He had said the same to Mr. Rerechild, the surgeon, when they two had had a consultation together at the palace on the occasion of a somewhat alarming birth of a grandchild. But he mixed up this information with so much medical Latin, and was so pompous over it, and the bishop was so anxious to be rid of him, that his words did not have much effect. What did it all matter? The thorn was gone, and the wife was dead, and the widower must balance his gain and loss as best he might.

He slept well, but when he woke in the morning the dreariness of his loneliness was very strong on him. He must do something, and must see somebody, but he felt that he did not know how to bear himself in his new position. He must send of course for his chaplain, and tell his chaplain to open all letters and to answer them for a week. Then he remembered how many of his letters in days of yore had been opened and been answered by the helpmate who had just gone from him. Since Dr. Tempest's visit he had insisted that the palace letter-bag should always be brought in the first instance to him;—and this had been done, greatly to the annoyance of his wife. In order that it might be done the bishop had been up every morning an hour before his usual time; and everybody in the household had known why it was so. He thought of this now as the bag was brought to him on the first morning of his freedom. He could have it where he pleased now;—either in his bedroom or left for him untouched on the breakfast-table till he should go to it. "Blessed be the name of the Lord," he said as he thought of all this; but he did not stop to analyse what he was saying. On this morning he would not enjoy his liberty, but desired that the letter-bag might be taken to Mr. Snapper, the chaplain.

The news of Mrs. Proudie's death had spread all over Barchester on the evening of its occurrence, and had been received with that feeling of distant awe which is always accompanied by some degree of pleasurable sensation. There was no one in Barchester to lament a mother, or a sister, or a friend who was really loved. There were those, doubtless, who regretted the woman's death,—and even some who regretted it without any feeling of personal damage done to themselves. There had

come to be around Mrs. Proudie a party who thought as she thought on church matters, and such people had lost their head, and thereby their strength. And she had been staunch to her own party, preferring bad tea from a low-church grocer, to good tea from a grocer who went to the ritualistic church or to no church at all. And it is due to her to say that she did not forget those who were true to her,—looking after them mindfully where looking after might be profitable, and fighting their battles where fighting might be more serviceable. I do not think that the appetite for breakfast of any man or woman in Barchester was disturbed by the news of Mrs. Proudie's death, but there were some who felt that a trouble had fallen on them.

Tidings of the catastrophe reached Hiram's Hospital on the evening of its occurrence,—Hiram's Hospital, where dwelt Mr. and Mrs. Quiverful with all their children. Now Mrs. Quiverful owed a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Proudie, having been placed in her present comfortable home by that lady's patronage. Mrs. Quiverful perhaps understood the character of the deceased woman, and expressed her opinion respecting it, as graphically as did any one in Barchester. There was the natural surprise felt at the Warden's lodge in the Hospital when the tidings were first received there, and the Quiverful family was at first too full of dismay, regrets and surmises, to be able to give themselves impartially to criticism. But on the following morning, conversation at the breakfast-table naturally referring to the great loss which the bishop had sustained, Mrs. Quiverful thus pronounced her opinion of her friend's character: "You'll find that he'll feel it, Q.," she said to her husband, in answer to some sarcastic remark made by him as to the removal of the thorn. "He'll feel it, though she was almost too many for him while she was alive."

"I daresay he'll feel it at first," said Quiverful; "but I think he'll be more comfortable than he has been."

"Of course he'll feel it, and go on feeling it till he dies, if he's the man I take him to be. You're not to think that there has been no love because there used to be some words, that he'll find himself the happier because he can do things more as he pleases. She was a great help to him, and he must have known that she was, in spite of the sharpness of her tongue. No doubt she was sharp. No doubt she was upsetting. And she could make herself a fool too in her struggles to have everything her own way. But, Q., there were worse women than Mrs. Proudie. She was never one of your idle ones, and I'm quite sure that no man or woman ever heard her say a word against her husband behind his back."

"All the same, she gave him a terribly bad life of it, if all is true that we hear."

"There are men who must have what you call a terribly bad life of it, whatever way it goes with them. The bishop is weak, and he wants somebody near to him to be strong. She was strong,—perhaps too strong; but he had his advantage out of it. After all I don't know that his life has been so terribly bad. I daresay he's had everything very comfortable about him. And a man ought to be grateful for that, though very few men ever are."

Mr. Quiverful's predecessor at the Hospital, old Mr. Harding, whose halcyon days in Barchester had been passed before the coming of the Proudies, was in bed playing cat's-cradle with Posy seated on the counterpane, when the tidings of Mrs. Proudie's death were brought to him by Mrs. Baxter. "Oh, sir," said Mrs. Baxter, seating herself on a chair by the bed-side. Mr. Harding liked Mrs. Baxter to sit down, because he was almost sure on such occasions to have the advantage of a prolonged conversation.

"What is it, Mrs. Baxter?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Is anything the matter?" And the old man attempted to raise himself in his bed.

"You mustn't frighten grandpa," said Posy.

"No, my dear; and there isn't nothing to frighten him. There isn't indeed, Mr. Harding. They're all well at Plumstead, and when I heard from the missus at Venice, everything was going on well."

"But what is it, Mrs. Baxter?"

"God forgive her all her sins—Mrs. Proudie ain't no more." Now there had been terrible feud between the palace and the deanery for years, in carrying on which the persons of the opposed households were wont to express themselves with eager animosity. Mrs. Baxter and Mrs. Draper never spoke to each other. The two coachmen each longed for an opportunity to take the other before a magistrate for some breach of the law of the road in driving. The footmen abused each other, and the grooms occasionally fought. The masters and mistresses contented themselves with simple hatred. Therefore it was not surprising that Mrs. Baxter, in speaking of the death of Mrs. Proudie, should remember first her sins.

"Mrs. Proudie dead!" said the old man.

"Indeed she is, Mr. Harding," said Mrs. Baxter, putting both her hands together piously. "We're just grass, ain't we, sir! and dust and clay and flowers of the field?" Whether Mrs. Proudie had most

partaken of the clayey nature or of the flowery nature, Mrs. Baxter did not stop to consider.

"Mrs. Proudie dead!" said Posy, with a solemnity that was all her own. "Then she won't scold the poor bishop any more."

"No, my dear; she won't scold anybody any more; and it will be a blessing for some, I must say. Everybody is always so considerate in this house, Miss Posy, that we none of us know nothing about what that is."

"Dead!" said Mr. Harding again. "I think, if you please, Mrs. Baxter, you shall leave me for a little time, and take Miss Posy with you." He had been in the city of Barchester some fifty years, and here was one who might have been his daughter, who had come there scarcely ten years since, and who now had gone before him! He had never loved Mrs. Proudie. Perhaps he had gone as near to disliking Mrs. Proudie as he had ever gone to disliking any person. Mrs. Proudie had wounded him in every part that was most sensitive. It would be long to tell, nor need it be told now, how she had ridiculed his cathedral work, how she had made nothing of him, how she had despised him, always manifesting her contempt plainly. He had been even driven to rebuke her, and it had perhaps been the only personal rebuke which he had ever uttered in Barchester. But now she was gone; and he thought of her simply as an active pious woman, who had been taken away from her work before her time. And for the bishop, no idea ever entered Mr. Harding's mind as to the removal of a thorn. The man had lost his life's companion at that time of life when such a companion is most needed; and Mr. Harding grieved for him with sincerity.

The news went out to Plumstead Episcopi by the postman, and happened to reach the archdeacon as he was talking to his rector at the little gate leading into the churchyard. "Mrs. Proudie dead!" he almost shouted, as the postman notified the fact to him. "Impossible!"

"It be so for zartain, yer reverence," said the postman, who was proud of his news.

"Heavens!" ejaculated the archdeacon, and then hurried in to his wife. "My dear," he said—and as he spoke he could hardly deliver himself of his words, so eager was he to speak them—"who do you think is dead? Gracious heavens! Mrs. Proudie is dead!" Mrs. Grantly dropped from her hand the teaspoonful of tea that was just going into the pot, and repeated her husband's words. "Mrs. Proudie dead?" There was a pause, during which they looked into each other's faces. "My dear, I don't believe it," said Mrs. Grantly.

But she did believe it very shortly. There were no prayers at

Plumstead rectory that morning. The archdeacon immediately went out into the village, and soon obtained sufficient evidence of the truth of that which the postman had told him. Then he rushed back to his wife. "It's true," he said. "It's quite true. She's dead. There's no doubt about that. She's dead. It was last night about seven. That was when they found her, at least, and she may have died about an hour before. Filgrave says not more than an hour."

"And how did she die?"

"Heart-complaint. She was standing up, taking hold of the bedstead, and so they found her." Then there was a pause, during which the archdeacon sat down to his breakfast. "I wonder how he felt when he heard it?"

"Of course he was terribly shocked."

"I've no doubt he was shocked. Any man would be shocked. But when you come to think of it, what a relief!"

"How can you speak of it in that way?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"How am I to speak of it in any other way?" said the archdeacon. "Of course I shouldn't go and say it out in the street."

"I don't think you ought to say it anywhere," said Mrs. Grantly. "The poor man no doubt feels about his wife in the same way that anybody else would."

"And if any other poor man has got such a wife as she was, you may be quite sure that he would be glad to be rid of her. I don't say that he wished her to die, or that he would have done anything to contrive her death——"

"Gracious, archdeacon; do, pray, hold your tongue."

"But it stands to reason that her going will be a great relief to him. What has she done for him? She has made him contemptible to everybody in the diocese by her interference, and his life has been a burden to him through her violence."

"Is that the way you carry out your proverb of De mortuis?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"The proverb of De mortuis is founded on humbug. Humbug out of doors is necessary. It would not do for you and me to go into the High Street just now and say what we think about Mrs. Proudie; but I don't suppose that kind of thing need be kept up in here, between you and me. She was an uncomfortable woman,—so uncomfortable that I cannot believe that any one will regret her. Dear me! Only to think that she has gone! You may as well give me my tea."

I do not think that Mrs. Grantly's opinion differed much from that expressed by her husband, or that she was, in truth, the least offended

by the archdeacon's plain speech. But it must be remembered that there was probably no house in the diocese in which Mrs. Proudie had been so thoroughly hated as she had been at the Plumstead rectory. There had been hatred at the deanery; but the hatred at the deanery had been mild in comparison with the hatred at Plumstead. The archdeacon was a sound friend; but he was also a sound enemy. From the very first arrival of the Proudies at Barchester, Mrs. Proudie had thrown down her gauntlet to him, and he had not been slow in picking it up. The war had been internecine, and each had given the other terrible wounds. It had been understood that there should be no quarter, and there had been none. His enemy was now dead, and the archdeacon could not bring himself to adopt before his wife the namby-pamby every-day decency of speaking well of one of whom he had ever thought ill, or of expressing regret when no regret could be felt. "May all her sins be forgiven her," said Mrs. Grantly. "Amen," said the archdeacon. There was something in the tone of his Amen which thoroughly implied that it was uttered only on the understanding that her departure from the existing world was to be regarded as an unmitigated good, and that she should, at any rate, never come back again to Barchester.

When Lady Lufton heard the tidings, she was not so bold in speaking of it as was her friend the archdeacon. "Mrs. Proudie dead!" she said to her daughter-in-law. This was some hours after the news had reached the house, and when the fact of the poor lady's death had been fully recognized. "What will he do without her?"

"The same as other men do," said young Lady Lufton.

"But, my dear, he is not the same as other men. He is not at all like other men. He is so weak that he cannot walk without a stick to lean upon. No doubt she was a virago, a woman who could not control her temper for a moment! No doubt she had led him a terrible life! I have often pitied him with all my heart. But, nevertheless, she was useful to him. I suppose she was useful to him. I can hardly believe that Mrs. Proudie is dead. Had he gone, it would have seemed so much more natural. Poor woman. I daresay she had her good points." The reader will be pleased to remember that the Luftons had ever been strong partisans on the side of the Grantlys.

The news made its way even to Hogglestock on the same day. Mrs. Crawley, when she heard it, went out after her husband, who was in the school. "Dead!" said he, in answer to her whisper. "Do you tell me that the woman is dead?" Then Mrs. Crawley explained that the tidings were credible. "May God forgive her all her sins,"

said Mr. Crawley. "She was a violent woman, certainly, and I think that she misunderstood her duties; but I do not say that she was a bad woman. I am inclined to think that she was earnest in her endeavours to do good." It never occurred to Mr. Crawley that he and his affair had, in truth, been the cause of her death.

It was thus that she was spoken of for a few days; and then men and women ceased to speak much of her, and began to talk of the bishop instead. A month had not passed before it was surmised that a man so long accustomed to the comforts of married life would marry again; and even then one lady connected with low-church clergymen in and around the city was named as a probable successor to the great lady who was gone. For myself, I am inclined to think that the bishop will for the future be content to lean upon his chaplain.

The monument that was put up to our old friend's memory in one of the side aisles of the choir of the cathedral was supposed to be designed and executed in good taste. There was a broken column, and on the column simply the words, "My beloved wife!" Then there was a slab by the column, bearing Mrs. Proudie's name, with the date of her life and death. Beneath this was the common inscription,—

"*Requiescat in pace.*"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE OBSTINACY OF MR. CRAWLEY.

Dr. Tempest, when he heard the news, sent immediately to Mr. Robarts, begging him to come over to Silverbridge. But this message was not occasioned solely by the death of Mrs. Proudie. Dr. Tempest had also heard that Mr. Crawley had submitted himself to the bishop, that instant advantage,—and as Dr. Tempest thought, unfair advantage, —had been taken of Mr. Crawley's submission, and that the pernicious Thumble had been at once sent over to Hogglestock. Had these palace doings with reference to Mr. Crawley been unaccompanied by the catastrophe which had happened, the doctor, much as he might have regretted them, would probably have felt that there was nothing to be done. He could not in such case have prevented Thumble's journey to Hogglestock on the next Sunday, and certainly he could not have softened the heart of the presiding genius at the palace. But things were very different now. The presiding genius was gone. Everybody at the palace would for a while be weak and vacillating. Thumble would be then thoroughly cowed; and it might at any rate be possible to make some movement in Mr. Crawley's favour. Dr. Tempest, therefore, sent for Mr. Robarts.

"I'm giving you a great deal of trouble, Robarts," said the doctor; "but then you are so much younger than I am, and I've an idea that you would do more for this poor man than any one else in the diocese." Mr. Robarts of course declared that he did not begrudge his trouble, and that he would do anything in his power for the poor man. "I think that you should see him again, and that you should then see Thumble also. I don't know whether you can condescend to be civil to Thumble. I could not."

"I am not quite sure that incivility would not be more efficacious," said Mr. Robarts.

"Very likely. There are men who are deaf as adders to courtesy, but who are compelled to obedience at once by ill-usage. Very likely Thumble is one of them; but of that you will be the best judge yourself. I would see Crawley first, and get his consent."

"That's the difficulty."

"Then I should go on without his consent, and I would see

Thumble and the bishop's chaplain, Snapper. I think you might manage just at this moment, when they will all be a little abashed and perplexed by this woman's death, to arrange that simply nothing shall be done. The great thing will be that Crawley should go on with the duty till the assizes. If it should then happen that he goes into Barchester, is acquitted, and comes back again, the whole thing will be over, and there will be no further interference in the parish. If I were you, I think I would try it." Mr. Robarts said that he would try it. "I daresay Mr. Crawley will be a little stiff-necked with you."

"He will be very stiff-necked with me," said Mr. Robarts.

"But I can hardly think that he will throw away the only means he has of supporting his wife and children, when he finds that there can be no occasion for his doing so. I do not suppose that any person wishes him to throw up his work now that that poor woman has gone."

Mr. Crawley had been almost in good spirits since the last visit which Mr. Thumble had made to him. It seemed as though the loss of everything in the world was in some way satisfactory to him. He had now given up his living by his own doing, and had after a fashion acknowledged his guilt by this act. He had proclaimed to all around him that he did not think himself to be any longer fit to perform the sacred functions of his office. He spoke of his trial as though a verdict against him must be the result. He knew that in going into prison he would leave his wife and children dependent on the charity of their friends,—on charity which they must condescend to accept, though he could not condescend to ask it. And yet he was able to carry himself now with a greater show of fortitude than had been within his power when the extent of his calamity was more doubtful. I must not ask the reader to suppose that he was cheerful. To have been cheerful under such circumstances would have been inhuman. But he carried his head on high, and walked firmly, and gave his orders at home with a clear voice. His wife, who was necessarily more despondent than ever, wondered at him,—but wondered in silence. It certainly seemed as though the very extremity of ill-fortune was good for him. And he was very diligent with his school, passing the greater part of the morning with the children. Mr. Thumble had told him that he would come on Sunday, and that he would then take charge of the parish. Up to the coming of Mr. Thumble he would do everything in the parish that could be done by a clergyman with a clear spirit and a free heart. Mr. Thumble should not find that spiritual weeds had grown rank in the parish because of his misfortunes.

Mrs. Proudie had died on the Tuesday,—that having been the day

of Mr. Thumble's visit to Hogglestock,—and Mr. Robarts had gone over to Silverbridge, in answer to Dr. Tempest's invitation, on the Thursday. He had not, therefore, the command of much time, it being his express object to prevent the appearance of Mr. Thumble at Hogglestock on the next Sunday. He had gone to Silverbridge by railway, and had, therefore, been obliged to postpone his visit to Mr. Crawley till the next day; but early on the Friday morning he rode over to Hogglestock. That he did not arrive there with a broken-knee'd horse, the reader may be quite sure. In all matters of that sort, Mr. Robarts was ever above reproach. He rode a good horse, and drove a neat gig, and was always well dressed. On this account Mr. Crawley, though he really liked Mr. Robarts, and was thankful to him for many kindnesses, could never bear his presence with perfect equanimity. Robarts was no scholar, was not a great preacher, had obtained no celebrity as a churchman,—had, in fact, done nothing to merit great reward; and yet everything had been given to him with an abundant hand. Within the last twelvemonth his wife had inherited Mr. Crawley did not care to know how many thousand pounds. And yet Mr. Robarts had won all that he possessed by being a clergyman. Was it possible that Mr. Crawley should regard such a man with equanimity? Robarts rode over with a groom behind him,—really taking the groom because he knew that Mr. Crawley would have no one to hold his horse for him;—and the groom was the source of great offence. He came upon Mr. Crawley standing at the school door, and stopping at once, jumped off his nag. There was something in the way in which he sprang out of the saddle and threw the reins to the man, which was not clerical in Mr. Crawley's eyes. No man could be so quick in the matter of a horse who spent as many hours with the poor and with the children as should be spent by a parish clergyman. It might be probable that Mr. Robarts had never stolen twenty pounds,—might never be accused of so disgraceful a crime,—but, nevertheless, Mr. Crawley had his own ideas, and made his own comparisons.

"Crawley," said Robarts, "I am so glad to find you at home."

"I am generally to be found in the parish," said the perpetual curate of Hogglestock.

"I know you are," said Robarts, who knew the man well, and cared nothing for his friend's peculiarities when he felt his own withers to be unwrung. "But you might have been down at Hoggle End with the brickmakers, and then I should have had to go after you."

"I should have grieved——," began Crawley; but Robarts interrupted him at once.

"Let us go for a walk, and I'll leave the man with the horses. I've something special to say to you, and I can say it better out here than in the house. Grace is quite well, and sends her love. She is growing to look so beautiful!"

"I hope she may grow in grace with God," said Mr. Crawley.

"She's as good a girl as I ever knew. By-the-by, you had Henry Grantly over here the other day?"

"Major Grantly, whom I cannot name without expressing my esteem for him, did do us the honour of calling upon us not very long since. If it be with reference to him that you have taken this trouble——"

"No, no; not at all. I'll allow him and the ladies to fight out that battle. I've not the least doubt in the world how that will go. When I'm told that she made a complete conquest of the archdeacon, there cannot be a doubt about that."

"A conquest of the archdeacon!"

But Mr. Robarts did not wish to have to explain anything further about the archdeacon. "Were you not terribly shocked, Crawley," he asked, "when you heard of the death of Mrs. Proudie?"

"It was sudden and very awful," said Mr. Crawley. "Such deaths are always shocking. Not more so, perhaps, as regards the wife of a bishop, than with any other woman."

"Only we happened to know her."

"No doubt the finite and meagre nature of our feelings does prevent us from extending our sympathies to those whom we have not seen in the flesh. It should not be so, and would not with one who had nurtured his heart with proper care. And we are prone to permit an evil worse than that to canker our regards and to foster and to mar our solicitudes. Those who are high in station strike us more by their joys and sorrows than do the poor and lowly. Were some young duke's wife, wedded but the other day, to die, all England would put on some show of mourning,—nay, would feel some true gleam of pity; but nobody cares for the widowed brickmaker seated with his starving infant on his cold hearth."

"Of course we hear more of the big people," said Robarts.

"Ay; and think more of them. But do not suppose, sir, that I complain of this man or that woman because his sympathies, or hers, runs out of that course which my reason tells me they should hold. The man with whom it would not be so would simply be a god among men. It is in his perfection as a man that we recognize the divinity of Christ. It is in the imperfection of men that we recognize our necessity for a Christ. Yes, sir, the death of the poor lady at Bar-

chester was very sudden. I hope that my lord the bishop bears with becoming fortitude the heavy misfortune. They say that he was a man much beholden to his wife,—prone to lean upon her in his goings out and comings in. For such a man such a loss is more dreadful perhaps than for another."

"They say she led him a terrible life, you know."

"I am not prone, sir, to believe much of what I hear about the domesticities of other men, knowing how little any other man can know of my own. And I have, methinks, observed a proneness in the world to ridicule that dependence on a woman which every married man should acknowledge in regard to the wife of his bosom, if he can trust her as well as love her. When I hear jocose proverbs spoken as to men, such as that in this house the gray mare is the better horse, or that in that house the wife wears that garment which is supposed to denote virile command, knowing that the joke is easy, and that meekness in a man is more truly noble than a habit of stern authority, I do not allow them to go far with me in influencing my judgment."

So spoke Mr. Crawley, who never permitted the slightest interference with his own word in his own family, and who had himself been a witness of one of those scenes between the bishop and his wife in which the poor bishop had been so cruelly misused. But to Mr. Crawley the thing which he himself had seen under such circumstances was as sacred as though it had come to him under the seal of confession. In speaking of the bishop and Mrs. Proudie,—nay, as far as was possible in thinking of them,—he was bound to speak and to think as though he had not witnessed that scene in the palace study.

"I don't suppose that there is much doubt about her real character," said Robarts. "But you and I need not discuss that."

"By no means. Such discussion would be both useless and unseemly."

"And just at present there is something else that I specially want to say to you. Indeed, I went to Silverbridge on the same subject yesterday, and have come here expressly to have a little conversation with you."

"If it be about affairs of mine, Mr. Robarts, I am indeed troubled in spirit that so great labour should have fallen upon you."

"Never mind my labour. Indeed your saying that is a nuisance to me, because I hoped that by this time you would have understood that I regard you as a friend, and that I think nothing any trouble that I do for a friend. Your position just now is so peculiar that it requires a great deal of care."

"No care can be of any avail to me."

"There I disagree with you. You must excuse me, but I do; and so does Dr. Tempest. We think that you have been a little too much in a hurry since he communicated to you the result of our first meeting."

"As how, sir?'

"It is, perhaps, hardly worth while for us to go into the whole question; but that man, Thumble, must not come here on next Sunday."

"I cannot say, Mr. Robarts, that the Reverend Mr. Thumble has recommended himself to me strongly either by his outward symbols of manhood or by such manifestation of his inward mental gifts as I have succeeded in obtaining. But my knowledge of him has been so slight, and has been acquired in a manner so likely to bias me prejudicially against him, that I am inclined to think my opinion should go for nothing. It is, however, the fact that the bishop has nominated him to this duty; and that, as I have myself simply notified my desire to be relieved from the care of the parish, on account of certain unfitness of my own, I am the last man who should interfere with the bishop in the choice of my temporary successor."

"It was her choice, not his."

"Excuse me, Mr. Robarts, but I cannot allow that assertion to pass unquestioned. I must say that I have adequate cause for believing that he came here by his lordship's authority."

"No doubt he did. Will you just listen to me for a moment? Ever since this unfortunate affair of the cheque became known, Mrs. Proudie has been anxious to get you out of this parish. She was a violent woman, and chose to take this matter up violently. Pray hear me out before you interrupt me. There would have been no commission at all but for her."

"The commission is right and proper and just," said Mr. Crawley, who could not keep himself silent.

"Very well. Let it be so. But Mr. Thumble's coming over here is not proper or right; and you may be sure the bishop does not wish it."

"Let him send any other clergyman whom he may think more fitting," said Mr. Crawley.

"But we do not want him to send anybody."

"Somebody must be sent, Mr. Robarts."

"No, not so. Let me go over and see Thumble and Snapper,—Snapper, you know, is the domestic chaplain; and all that you need do is to go on with your services on Sunday. If necessary, I will see the

bishop. I think you may be sure that I can manage it. If not, I will come back to you." Mr. Robarts paused for an answer, but it seemed for awhile that all Mr. Crawley's impatient desire to speak was over. He walked on silently along the lane by his visitor's side, and when, after some five or six minutes, Robarts stood still in the road, Mr. Crawley even then said nothing. "It cannot be but that you should be anxious to keep the income of the parish for your wife and children," said Mark Robarts.

"Of course, I am anxious for my wife and children," Crawley answered.

"Then let me do as I say. Why should you throw away a chance, even if it be a bad one? But here the chance is all in your favour. Let me manage it for you at Barchester."

"Of course I am anxious for my wife and children," said Crawley, repeating his words; "how anxious, I fancy no man can conceive who has not been near enough to absolute want to know how terrible is its approach when it threatens those who are weak and who are very dear! But, Mr. Robarts, you spoke just now of the chance of the thing,—the chance of your arranging on my behalf that I should for a while longer be left in the enjoyment of the freehold of my parish. It seemeth to me that there should be no chance on such a subject; that in the adjustment of so momentous a matter there should be a consideration of right and wrong, and no consideration of aught beside. I have been growing to feel, for some weeks past, that circumstances,—whether through my own fault or not is an outside question as to which I will not further delay you by offering even an opinion,—that unfortunate circumstances have made me unfit to remain here as guardian of the souls of the people of this parish. Then there came to me the letter from Dr. Tempest,—for which I am greatly beholden to him,—strengthening me altogether in this view. What could I do then, Mr. Robarts? Could I allow myself to think of my wife and my children when such a question as that was before me for self-discussion?"

"I would,—certainly," said Robarts.

"No, sir! Excuse the bluntness of my contradiction, but I feel assured that in such emergency you would look solely to duty,—as by God's help, I will endeavour to do. Mr. Robarts, there are many of us who in many things, are much worse than we believe ourselves to be. But in other matters, and perhaps of larger moment, we can rise to ideas of duty as the need for such ideas comes upon us. I say not this at all as praising myself. I speak of men as I believe that they will be found to be;—of yourself, of myself, and of others who strive to live

with clean hands and a clear conscience. I do not for a moment think that you would retain your benefice at Framley if there had come upon you, after much thought, an assured conviction that you could not retain it without grievous injury to the souls of others and grievous sin to your own. Wife and children, dear as they are to you and to me, —as dear to me as to you,—fade from the sight when the time comes for judgment on such a matter as that!" They were standing quite still now, facing each other, and Crawley, as he spoke with a low voice, looked straight into his friend's eyes, and kept his hand firmly fixed on his friend's arm.

"I cannot interfere further," said Robarts.

"No,—you cannot interfere further." Robarts, when he told the story of the interview to his wife that evening, declared that he had never heard a voice so plaintively touching as was the voice of Mr. Crawley when he uttered those last words.

They returned back to the servant and the house almost without a word, and Robarts mounted without offering to see Mrs. Crawley. Nor did Mr. Crawley ask him to do so. It was better now that Robarts should go. "May God send you through all your troubles," said Mr. Robarts.

"Mr. Robarts, I thank you warmly, for your friendship," said Mr. Crawley. And then they parted. In about half an hour Mr. Crawley returned to the house. "Now for Pindar, Jane," he said, seating himself at his old desk.

CHAPTER LXIX.

MR. CRAWLEY'S LAST APPEARANCE IN HIS OWN PULPIT.

No word or message from Mr. Crawley reached Barchester throughout the week, and on the Sunday morning Mr. Thumble was under a positive engagement to go out to Hogglestock, and perform the services of the church. Dr. Tempest had been quite right in saying that Mr. Thumble would be awed by the death of his patroness. Such was altogether the case, and he was very anxious to escape from the task he had undertaken at her instance, if it were possible. In the first place, he had never been a favourite with the bishop himself, and had now, therefore, nothing to expect in the diocese. The crusts from bits of loaves and the morsels of broken fishes which had come in his way had all come from the bounty of Mrs. Proudie. And then, as regarded this special Hogglestock job, how was he to get paid for it? Whence, indeed, was he to seek repayment for the actual money which he would be out of pocket in finding his way to Hogglestock and back again? But he could not get to speak to the bishop, nor could he induce any one who had access to his lordship to touch upon the subject. Mr. Snapper avoided him as much as possible; and Mr. Snapper, when he was caught and interrogated, declared that he regarded the matter as settled. Nothing could be in worse taste, Mr. Snapper thought, than to undo, immediately after the poor lady's death, work in the diocese which had been arranged and done by her. Mr. Snapper expressed his opinion that Mr. Thumble was bound to go out to Hogglestock; and, when Mr. Thumble declared petulantly that he would not stir a step out of Barchester, Mr. Snapper protested that Mr. Thumble would have to answer for it in this world and in the next if there were no services at Hogglestock on that Sunday. On the Saturday evening Mr. Thumble made a desperate attempt to see the bishop, but was told by Mrs. Draper that the bishop had positively declined to see him. The bishop himself probably felt unwilling to interfere with his wife's doings so soon after her death! So Mr. Thumble, with a heavy heart, went across to "The Dragon of Wantly," and ordered a gig, resolving that the bill should be sent in to the palace. He was not going to trust himself again upon the bishop's cob!

Up to Saturday evening Mr. Crawley did the work of his parish, and on the Saturday evening he made an address to his parishioners from his pulpit. He had given notice among the brickmakers and labourers that he wished to say a few words to them in the school-room; but the farmers also heard of this and came with their wives and daughters, and all the brickmakers came, and most of the labourers were there, so that there was no room for them in the school-house. The congregation was much larger than was customary even in the church. "They will come," he said to his wife, "to hear a ruined man declare his own ruin, but they will not come to hear the word of God." When it was found that the persons assembled were too many for the school-room, the meeting was adjourned to the church, and Mr. Crawley was forced to get into his pulpit. He said a short prayer, and then he began his story.

His story as he told it then shall not be repeated now, as the same story has been told too often already in these pages. Surely it was a singular story for a parish clergyman to tell of himself in so solemn a manner. That he had applied the cheque to his own purposes, and was unable to account for the possession of it, was certain. He did not know when or how he had got it. Speaking to them then in God's house he told them that. He was to be tried by a jury, and all he could do was to tell the jury the same. He would not expect the jury to believe him. The jury would, of course, believe only that which was proved to them. But he did expect his old friends at Hogglestock, who had known him so long, to take his word as true. That there was no sufficient excuse for his conduct, even in his own sight, this, his voluntary resignation of his parish, was, he said, sufficient evidence. Then he explained to them, as clearly as he was able, what the bishop had done, what the commission had done, and what he had done himself. That he spoke no word of Mrs. Proudie to that audience need hardly be mentioned here. "And now, dearest friends, I leave you," he said, with that weighty solemnity which was so peculiar to the man, and which he was able to make singularly impressive even on such a congregation as that of Hogglestock, "and I trust that the heavy but pleasing burden of the charge which I have had over you may fall into hands better fitted than mine have been for such work. I have always known my own unfitness, by reason of the worldly cares with which I have been laden. Poverty makes the spirit poor, and the hands weak, and the heart sore,—and too often makes the conscience dull. May the latter never be the case with any of you." Then he uttered another short prayer, and, stepping down from the pulpit, walked out of the

church, with his weeping wife hanging on his arm, and his daughter following them, almost dissolved in tears. He never again entered that church as the pastor of the congregation.

There was an old lame man from Hoggle End leaning on his stick near the door as Mr. Crawley went out, and with him was his old lame wife. "He'll pull through yet," said the old man to his wife; "you'll see else. He'll pull through because he's so dogged. It's dogged as does it."

On that night the position of the members of Mr. Crawley's household seemed to have been changed. There was something almost of elation in his mode of speaking, and he said soft loving words, striving to comfort his wife. She, on the other hand, could say nothing to comfort him. She had been averse to the step he was taking, but had been unable to press her objection in opposition to his great argument as to duty. Since he had spoken to her in that strain which he had used with Robarts, she also had felt that she must be silent. But she could not even feign to feel the pride which comes from the performance of a duty. "What will he do when he comes out?" she said to her daughter. The coming out spoken of by her was the coming out of prison. It was natural enough that she should feel no elation.

The breakfast on Sunday morning was to her, perhaps, the saddest scene of her life. They sat down, the three together, at the usual hour,—nine o'clock,—but the morning had not been passed as was customary on Sundays. It had been Mr. Crawley's practice to go into the school from eight to nine; but on this Sunday he felt, as he told his wife, that his presence would be an intrusion there. But he requested Jane to go and perform her usual task. "If Mr. Thumble should come," he said to her, "be submissive to him in all things." Then he stood at his door, watching to see at what hour Mr. Thumble would reach the school. But Mr. Thumble did not attend the school on that morning. "And yet he was very express to me in his desire that I would not myself meddle with the duties," said Mr. Crawley to his wife as he stood at the door,—"unnecessarily urgent, as I must say I thought at the time." If Mrs. Crawley could have spoken out her thoughts about Mr. Thumble at that moment, her words would, I think, have surprised her husband.

At breakfast there was hardly a word spoken. Mr. Crawley took his crust and eat it mournfully,—almost ostentatiously. Jane tried and failed, and tried to hide her failure, failing in that also. Mrs. Crawley made no attempt. She sat behind her old teapot, with her hands

clasped and her eyes fixed. It was as though some last day had come upon her,—this, the first Sunday of her husband's degradation. "Mary," he said to her, "why do you not eat?"

"I cannot," she replied, speaking not in a whisper, but in words which would hardly get themselves articulated. "I cannot. Do not ask me."

"For the honour of the Lord you will want the strength which bread alone can give you," he said, intimating to her that he wished her to attend the service.

"Do not ask me to be there, Josiah. I cannot. It is too much for me."

"Nay; I will not press it," he said. "I can go alone." He uttered no word expressive of a wish that his daughter should attend the church; but when the moment came, Jane accompanied him. "What shall I do, mamma," she said, "if I find I cannot bear it?" "Try to bear it," the mother said. "Try, for his sake. You are stronger now than I am."

The tinkle of the church bell was heard at the usual time, and Mr. Crawley, hat in hand, stood ready to go forth. He had heard nothing of Mr. Thumble, but had made up his mind that Mr. Thumble would not trouble him. He had taken the precaution to request his churchwarden to be early at the church, so that Mr. Thumble might encounter no difficulty. The church was very near to the house, and any vehicle arriving might have been seen had Mr. Crawley watched closely. But no one had cared to watch Mr. Thumble's arrival at the church. He did not doubt that Mr. Thumble would be at the church. With reference to the school, he had had some doubt.

But just as he was about to start he heard the clatter of a gig. Up came Mr. Thumble to the door of the parsonage, and having come down from his gig was about to enter the house as though it were his own. Mr. Crawley greeted him in the pathway, raising his hat from his head, and expressing a wish that Mr. Thumble might not feel himself fatigued with his drive. "I will not ask you into my poor house," he said, standing in the middle of the pathway; "for that my wife is ill."

"Nothing catching, I hope?" said Mr. Thumble.

"Her malady is of the spirit rather than of the flesh," said Mr. Crawley. "Shall we go on to the church?"

"Certainly,—by all means. How about the surplice?"

"You will find, I trust, that the churchwarden has everything in

readiness. I have notified to him expressly your coming, with the purport that it may be so."

"You'll take a part in the service, I suppose?" said Mr. Thumble.

"No part,—no part whatever," said Mr. Crawley, standing still for a moment as he spoke, and showing plainly by the tone of his voice how dismayed he was, how indignant he had been made, by so indecent a proposition. Was he giving up his pulpit to a stranger for any reason less cogent than one which made it absolutely imperative on him to be silent in that church which had so long been his own?

"Just as you please," said Mr. Thumble. "Only it's rather hard lines to have to do it all myself after coming all the way from Barchester this morning." To this Mr. Crawley condescended to make no reply whatever.

In the porch of the church, which was the only entrance, Mr. Crawley introduced Mr. Thumble to the churchwarden, simply by a wave of the hand, and then passed on with his daughter to a seat which opened upon the aisle. Jane was going on to that which she had hitherto always occupied with her mother in the little chancel; but Mr. Crawley would not allow this. Neither to him nor to any of his family was there attached any longer the privilege of using the chancel of the church of Hogglestock.

Mr. Thumble scrambled into the reading-desk some ten minutes after the proper time, and went through the morning service under, what must be admitted to be, serious difficulties. There were the eyes of Mr. Crawley fixed upon him throughout the work, and a feeling pervaded him that everybody there regarded him as an intruder. At first this was so strong upon him that Mr. Crawley pitied him, and would have encouraged him had it been possible. But as the work progressed, and as custom and the sound of his own voice emboldened him, there came to the man some touches of the arrogance which so generally accompanies cowardice, and Mr. Crawley's acute ear detected the moment when it was so. An observer might have seen that the motion of his hands was altered as they were lifted in prayer. Though he was praying, even in prayer he could not forget the man who was occupying his desk.

Then came the sermon, preached very often before, lasting exactly half-an-hour, and then Mr. Thumble's work was done. Itinerant clergymen, who preach now here and now there, as it had been the lot of Mr. Thumble to do, have at any rate this relief,—that they can preach their sermons often. From the communion-table Mr. Thumble had stated that, in the present peculiar circumstances of the parish,

there would be no second service at Hogglestock for the present; and this was all he said or did peculiar to the occasion. The moment the service was over he got into his gig, and was driven back to Barchester.

"Mamma," said Jane, as they sat at their dinner, "such a sermon I am sure was never heard in Hogglestock before. Indeed, you can hardly call it a sermon. It was downright nonsense."

"My dear," said Mr. Crawley, energetically, "keep your criticisms for matters that are profane; then, though they be childish and silly, they may at least be innocent. Be critical on Euripides, if you must be critical." But when Jane kissed her father after dinner, she, knowing his humour well, felt assured that her remarks had not been taken altogether in ill part.

Mr. Thumble was neither seen nor heard of again in the parish during the entire week.

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